

B2–C1 English Conversation Practice

Three Extended Dialogues

Dialogue 1 — Learning a New Profession

David: I've been seriously considering learning a completely new profession, although I'm still trying to decide whether changing careers at this stage of my life would be a sensible decision.

Michael: That's quite a significant decision, so what made you start thinking about changing your profession after spending so many years in the same field?

David: I realized that although my current job provides financial stability, I don't feel that I'm developing anymore, and most of my responsibilities have become repetitive rather than challenging.

Michael: I understand that feeling because having a stable income is valuable, but stability can eventually become frustrating if you feel that you're simply repeating the same tasks without acquiring new skills.

David: Exactly, and I've recently become interested in becoming a professional photographer because I've always enjoyed taking photographs, and I would like to see whether something I consider a hobby could eventually become a career.

Michael: Have you thought about how long it would take to become good enough to earn a living from photography rather than simply taking pictures for your own enjoyment?

David: According to the courses I've looked at, I could learn the technical fundamentals within a year, but developing a professional portfolio and building a reliable client base would probably take considerably longer.

Michael: That sounds realistic because learning the technical side of a profession is often easier than developing the experience and reputation necessary to compete in the real market.

David: That's one of my biggest concerns, particularly because I would be competing with people who have been working professionally for years and already have established networks.

Michael: On the other hand, your previous professional experience could actually give you an advantage because you already understand deadlines, communication with clients, and the importance of delivering what you've promised.

David: I hadn't thought about it that way, but you're right that changing professions doesn't mean starting completely from zero because some skills are transferable.

Michael: Exactly, and skills such as organization, negotiation, problem-solving, and dealing with difficult customers can be useful in almost any profession.

David: The financial aspect is still worrying me because I can't simply quit my current job and spend two years studying without any income.

Michael: Then perhaps you should treat it as a gradual transition rather than an immediate career change, especially if you can study in the evenings or at weekends.

David: That's probably the safest approach, because I could continue earning money while gradually building the knowledge and experience I would need for the new profession.

Michael: Would you consider taking occasional freelance assignments once you feel confident enough, even if they don't initially pay very well?

David: Yes, because real-world experience would probably teach me things that a course couldn't, particularly when it comes to dealing with clients and understanding what people actually expect.

Michael: You should also be prepared for the possibility that your first attempts won't be successful, because changing careers almost always involves making mistakes before you become competent.

David: I'm actually more concerned about losing motivation halfway through the process than I am about making mistakes.

Michael: In that case, you should establish measurable goals, such as completing a certain number of projects, improving specific skills, and building a portfolio by a particular date.

David: That's a good idea because having concrete targets would make the process feel more manageable instead of leaving me with the vague goal of simply "becoming a photographer."

Michael: Have you discussed the idea with your family?

David: I mentioned it to my wife, and although she was surprised initially, she said she would support me as long as I didn't put our financial security at unnecessary risk.

Michael: That sounds like a reasonable response, because a career change can affect the entire family rather than just the person making the decision.

David: Another thing I'm considering is whether I should get formal qualifications or focus entirely on practical experience.

Michael: I would probably combine the two, because formal education can provide structure and credibility, while practical projects can demonstrate what you're actually capable of doing.

David: I've also discovered that professional networking seems to be almost as important as technical ability, which wasn't something I had expected when I first started researching the profession.

Michael: That's often the case because talented people can still struggle to find opportunities if nobody knows what they can offer.

David: The more I investigate, the more I realize that changing careers isn't simply about learning a new skill; it's about gradually building an entirely new professional identity.

Michael: And that's precisely why you shouldn't rush the process, because giving yourself enough time to test the profession can help you discover whether you genuinely enjoy the reality of the job.

David: You're right, because enjoying photography during holidays is very different from photographing weddings, products, or events under pressure while a client is waiting for the final result.

Michael: If you can experience the less glamorous side of the profession and still feel enthusiastic about it, you'll have much stronger evidence that the change is worth pursuing.

David: Then I think I'll keep my current job for now, enroll in a serious course, and give myself eighteen months to determine whether I can realistically make photography my second profession.

Dialogue 2 — Planning a Trip to China

Sarah: I've been thinking about travelling to China next spring, but I don't want to spend the entire trip rushing from one tourist attraction to another without really experiencing the country.

James: I agree, especially because China is so enormous that trying to see everything in a short period would probably leave us exhausted rather than satisfied.

Sarah: My first thought was to spend several days in Beijing because I want to visit the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, and some of the older neighbourhoods that show what the city was like before modern development transformed it.

James: Beijing would definitely be worth visiting, but I'd also like to see Xi'an because the Terracotta Army is one of those historical sites that you probably appreciate much more when you understand the historical context behind it.

Sarah: I agree, and I've heard that Xi'an has a fascinating food culture as well, particularly its street food and dishes influenced by the city's history as an important point along the Silk Road.

James: Shanghai would give us a completely different perspective because it represents a much more modern and international side of China, with its skyscrapers, financial district, shopping areas, and extremely developed public transportation.

Sarah: That's exactly why I want to include it, because comparing Beijing, Xi'an, and Shanghai could show us how different parts of the same country can have completely different atmospheres.

James: How long are you thinking of staying?

Sarah: Ideally, around three weeks, because anything shorter would make the journey feel unnecessarily rushed considering the distance and the number of places I'd like to visit.

James: Three weeks should give us enough flexibility, although we'll need to decide whether travelling between cities by plane or high-speed train makes more sense.

Sarah: I'd prefer the high-speed train whenever the journey isn't excessively long because the experience itself would be interesting, and we wouldn't have to deal with airport procedures every time we changed cities.

James: I agree, and travelling by train would also allow us to see more of the countryside instead of spending most of the journey above the clouds.

Sarah: One thing I'm slightly concerned about is communication because I don't speak Mandarin, and I don't want to find myself in a situation where nobody understands what I'm trying to explain.

James: We could learn a few basic phrases before going, and we should probably download the necessary translation tools and prepare offline versions in case we don't have reliable internet access.

Sarah: That's sensible, especially because I don't want to depend entirely on technology when we're somewhere unfamiliar.

James: What about food?

Sarah: I'm actually looking forward to trying local dishes, although I know we'll probably encounter ingredients and flavours that are completely unfamiliar to us.

James: That's part of the fun, but we should probably be careful during the first few days and avoid ordering enormous amounts of food simply because the menu looks interesting.

Sarah: Agreed, although I definitely want to eat in small local restaurants rather than spending every evening in international hotel restaurants.

James: I'd also like to visit some places outside the major tourist areas, because I think observing ordinary neighbourhoods would give us a better understanding of everyday life.

Sarah: Exactly, but we should make sure that we behave respectfully and don't treat local residents as if they were part of a tourist attraction.

James: That's an important point, especially when photographing people or entering religious and historical places where there may be specific expectations concerning behaviour.

Sarah: We should also research the practical side of the trip carefully, including entry requirements, payment methods, transportation apps, and anything else that might work differently from what we're accustomed to.

James: Definitely, because being prepared doesn't mean that we have to plan every minute; it simply reduces the chance that a preventable problem will ruin an otherwise enjoyable journey.

Sarah: I'd like to spend at least five days in Beijing, perhaps four in Xi'an, and then use the remaining time for Shanghai and a smaller destination nearby.

James: That sounds reasonable, although I'd rather leave two or three completely unplanned days in case we discover somewhere interesting and decide to stay longer.

Sarah: I like that idea because some of the best travel experiences happen when you have enough freedom to change your plans.

James: We should also agree beforehand on our travel budget, because I'd rather know roughly what we're willing to spend instead of having an awkward conversation halfway through the trip.

Sarah: Absolutely, and we should probably divide expenses clearly while allowing each of us to spend extra money on personal interests such as shopping or special activities.

James: If everything goes according to plan, this could be one of those trips where we return home feeling that we've learned something about the country rather than simply collecting photographs.

Sarah: That's exactly what I'm hoping for, because I want the trip to challenge some of my assumptions and give me a more realistic understanding of what everyday life in China is actually like.

James: Then let's start with the basic route and transportation options, and once we've agreed on those, we can build the rest of the itinerary around them.

Sarah: Deal, although I'm warning you now that I intend to spend at least one entire evening exploring a local food market without knowing exactly what we're going to eat.

Dialogue 3 — Problems and Follow-Up in a Commercial Company

Mark: Have you heard from the supplier about the shipment we were expecting this morning, because the customer has already called twice asking whether everything is still on schedule?

Laura: I contacted them about an hour ago, and unfortunately they informed me that production was delayed because one of the raw materials arrived later than expected.

Mark: That's a serious problem because the original loading date was confirmed for Thursday, and the customer has arranged their own production schedule based on that commitment.

Laura: I know, which is why I asked the supplier to give me a realistic date instead of another estimated deadline that might change again tomorrow.

Mark: Did they provide one?

Laura: They said the goods should be ready by Monday afternoon, but they haven't guaranteed that the carrier will be able to collect them on the same day.

Mark: Then we shouldn't tell the customer that Monday is confirmed until we've received written confirmation from both the supplier and the transport company.

Laura: I completely agree, because giving the customer an optimistic answer now and then changing it again later would make the situation much worse.

Mark: Have you checked whether another supplier could provide at least part of the order?

Laura: I contacted two alternatives, but neither has the full quantity available, and their prices are considerably higher than the original quotation.

Mark: Even if the alternative is more expensive, we should calculate whether the additional cost would be justified if it prevented a much larger financial loss for the customer.

Laura: I'm already working on that comparison, but we also need to consider transportation costs, because splitting the order between two suppliers could create additional freight and handling charges.

Mark: Good point, and we should make sure that nobody commits to an alternative purchase before management approves the additional cost.

Laura: I've prepared a summary showing the original schedule, the revised supplier estimate, the alternative offers, and the possible consequences of each option.

Mark: Excellent, because having everything in one document will make it much easier to explain the situation to the manager without going through dozens of separate emails.

Laura: There's another issue we need to deal with: the commercial invoice we received yesterday contains the wrong product description for several items.

Mark: Who noticed that?

Laura: The customs broker pointed it out this morning and said that the documents should be corrected before the shipment arrives at the port.

Mark: Then we need to contact the supplier immediately, because a documentation error could cause another delay even if the physical goods are ready on time.

Laura: I've already sent them an email, but I haven't received a response yet, so I'm going to call their export department directly rather than waiting indefinitely.

Mark: That's the right approach, especially when an issue is time-sensitive and a simple phone call can resolve something that might otherwise take an entire day through email.

Laura: Once I receive the corrected documents, I'll forward them to the customs broker and ask them to confirm in writing that everything is acceptable.

Mark: Good, and I'll contact the customer to explain that we're currently dealing with a production delay and that we're evaluating several options to minimize its impact.

Laura: Do you think we should mention the supplier's mistake in the documents as well?

Mark: I'd avoid giving them unnecessary internal details unless those details directly affect the delivery, because the customer mainly needs to know what happened, what we're doing about it, and when they can expect a reliable update.

Laura: That makes sense, and I'll make sure I don't promise a delivery date until we have enough information to support it.

Mark: Exactly, because managing expectations is just as important as solving the operational problem itself.

Laura: I've also created a follow-up schedule so that we don't have to wait for people to remember to contact us; I'll check with the supplier tomorrow morning and again after lunch if they haven't responded.

Mark: And I'll follow up with the transport company to see whether they can provide a vehicle at short notice if the goods become available earlier than expected.

Laura: We should probably keep the customer updated even if there is no major development, because silence can easily make them assume that the situation is getting worse.

Mark: I agree, although the updates should be meaningful rather than simply saying that we're still waiting for someone else to respond.

Laura: Exactly, so I'll send them a short update today and tell them that I'll provide another confirmed status tomorrow afternoon.

Mark: In the meantime, I'll review the alternative supplier quotations and calculate the additional cost per unit so that we can make a decision based on actual figures rather than assumptions.

Laura: If we manage to solve both the production delay and the documentation problem today, we may still be able to keep the overall shipment close to the original schedule.

Mark: And even if we can't completely avoid the delay, at least we'll have a clear action plan, accurate information, and a record of every step we've taken to minimize the consequences.

Laura: That's what matters now, because when several departments and external companies are involved, good follow-up can be the difference between a manageable delay and a major commercial problem.